

## **COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM**

**FY 2002 ANNUAL REPORT**

**PROJECT NUMBER: PIP 12K (C-9, 113, 114)**

**I. Project Title: Public Involvement for Yampa River, Gunnison River and other Tributary Basins**

**II. Principal Investigator:**

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**III. Project Summary:**

The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement management plans for the Yampa River, Gunnison River and other significant tributaries of the Upper Colorado River Basin. The purpose of these management plans is to provide and/or protect instream flows and other habitat needed to maintain and recover the endangered fishes while water continues to be depleted for existing and foreseeable future human needs. Each plan serves as the basis for development of a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO). This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is intended to engage stakeholders in the planning process for the purpose of identifying and focusing significant issues for consideration in formulating and evaluating alternative actions. This PIP has the following objectives:

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basinwide management plan and PBO.
- To enhance an appreciation by the public and key stakeholders for the uniqueness of their basin, its value to the endangered fish and other native species.
- To enhance the image of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recovery Program as credible entities in the eyes of the public and key stakeholders.
- To increase support within water-user, scientific and environmental communities to effectively implement the management plans.

**IV. Study Schedule:**

Initial year: FY 2002

Final year: FY 2004

**V. Relationship to RIPRAP:**

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:

VI.C. Plan and implement information and education and public involvement activities for all significant Recovery Program actions (e.g presentations, public meetings, public involvement training, etc.).

**VI. Accomplishment of FY 2002 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:**

Tactic: Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with ESA and NEPA requirements, if applicable. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed.

Status: Developed a draft management plan for the Yampa River and issued the plan in October 2001 for public review and comment. Summarized and responded to comments (both written and oral) and revised plan based on comments received. Evaluated and ranked other tributary basins based largely on the work of Tyus and Saunders (2001). However, no further action will be taken on other tributaries until flow recommendations for the Gunnison, Duchesne and White rivers are revised and approved, depletion estimates for Gunnison, Dolores and other tributaries are developed, and existing biological opinions are evaluated to determine their adequacy in addressing the impacts of future depletions.

Tactic: Disseminate and/or present information about the Recovery Program to affected interest groups and stakeholders. Write and/or disseminate news releases, newsletter articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on the purpose, activities, accomplishments and status of basinwide planning processes, including NEPA/ESA compliance.

Status: News releases and question/answer materials were prepared and disseminated about efforts to remove and relocate northern pike from the Yampa River to area ponds and reservoirs.

Tactic: Investigate opportunities to educate school children about the local riverine ecosystem and its importance to the endangered fish through the River Watch program, Project WILD, The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs.

Status: Worked with The Nature Conservancy's education coordinator at Carpenter Ranch to develop and present information to high school students and their science teachers on the endangered fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin, and what it will take to recover them. Teachers will use this information to develop environmental curricula. In addition, provided specific information on the Yampa River ecosystem at Carpenter Ranch to incorporate into a mural by the students. The mural serves as a backdrop to an aquarium at the Carpenter Ranch displaying young razorback sucker. Work crews from Colorado State University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also shared information with students they encountered at the ranch about the impact of nonnative predators, such as northern pike, on endangered Colorado pikeminnow and other native fishes.

Tactic: Conduct public meetings to provide information to and obtain input from the public. Incorporate public input when formulating and evaluating alternative actions.

Status: Three public meetings were held in November 2001 following completion of a draft management plan for the Yampa River to receive comments on the plan and to solicit NEPA scoping input for an environmental assessment on the plan.

Tactic: Attend relevant meetings of county commissioners, city councils, water conservancy districts, and other stakeholder groups. Report on the status of planning processes and identify concerns. Address concerns in a timely and straightforward manner.

Status: Attended meetings of the Yampa River Basin Partnership, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District Board to provide progress reports on the Yampa River PBO and other tributaries planning processes. Also attended meetings of Colorado Water Division 4 (Gunnison River basin) and Division 5 (Colorado River basin) stakeholders.

**VII. Recommendations:** The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with local stakeholders to ensure their needs and concerns are adequately addressed throughout the planning process. Given the high levels of local interest and potential controversy surrounding nonnative fish management activities in the Yampa basin and elsewhere, a separate PIP should be developed for this activity.

**VIII. Project Status:** Ongoing.

**IX. FY 2002 Budget Status**

- A. Funds Provided: \$2,000
- B. Funds Expended: 1,840
- C. Difference: \$ 160 (carry forward to FY 2003)
- D. Percent of the FY 2002 work completed: 100%
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$1,840.

**X. Status of Data Submission** (Where applicable): n/a

**XI. Signed:** Gerry Roehm February 1, 2003  
Instream Flow Coordinator Date